

# PLOTS, PAPERS AND REPORTS, OH MY!

June 29, 2012 Kayt Armstrong Archaeological Prospection, Bronze Age, Day of Archaeology 2012, Digital Archaeology, Education, Iron Age, Italy, Prehistory, Survey future researcher, geophysics, GIS, gradiometer, Italy, judge, magnetic susceptibility, Martijn, MS, project leader, Roman London, Rural Life in Protohistoric Italy, southampton, United Kingdom

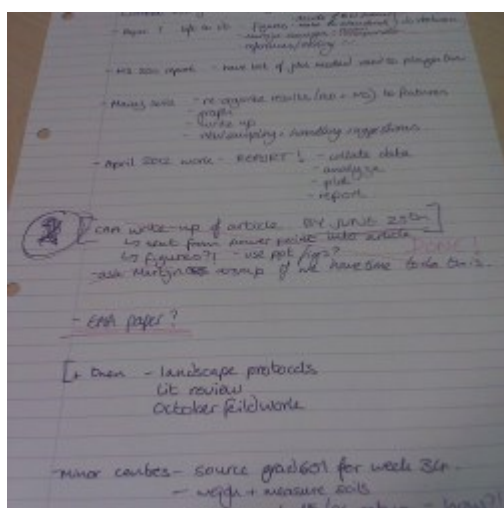


*Wieke surveying at Monte san Nicole*

I woke up this morning very excited about the Day of Archaeology, and looked over the first few posts while I ate my breakfast at home. It was a good moment to reflect on the last eleven months, since [Day of Archaeology 2011](#). I've moved out of the shipping container (!) and now have a lovely flat near the park. I also now work full time, have been appointed a second post-doc position for the 'other' 20% of my time within my department (looking at [Roman Minor Centres](#) in the Pontine region). Technically, they have my fridays, but in practice we're more

flexible than that as they'll need me for whole weeks at a time later in the year, so I'll be working on [Rural Life](#) stuff today...

**09:00** – and I've just arrived at work by bike- almost all of my colleagues bike or walk to work, even if they come from further afield, they'll use the train. I check my email then get to grips with my to-do list (after tweeting it!). I'm happy because I've been able to cross a couple of things off it this week. I had to drop everything to get our [CAA 2012 paper](#) written up, after delivering it in Southampton in March (I've been on [two lots of fieldwork](#) and short holiday since- and haven't had time to update my blog), and we've been working on the final push to get two pilot geophysical studies published. The latter isn't quite finished, but it's at the point of having been sent off to be read by someone other than me and Martijn- my project leader. We're both at the point with it where we can't really judge it objectively any more. I'm glad it's almost done- it's very difficult to write up research you didn't conduct yourself, and I really hope that I've done justice to the work of the people involved before me!



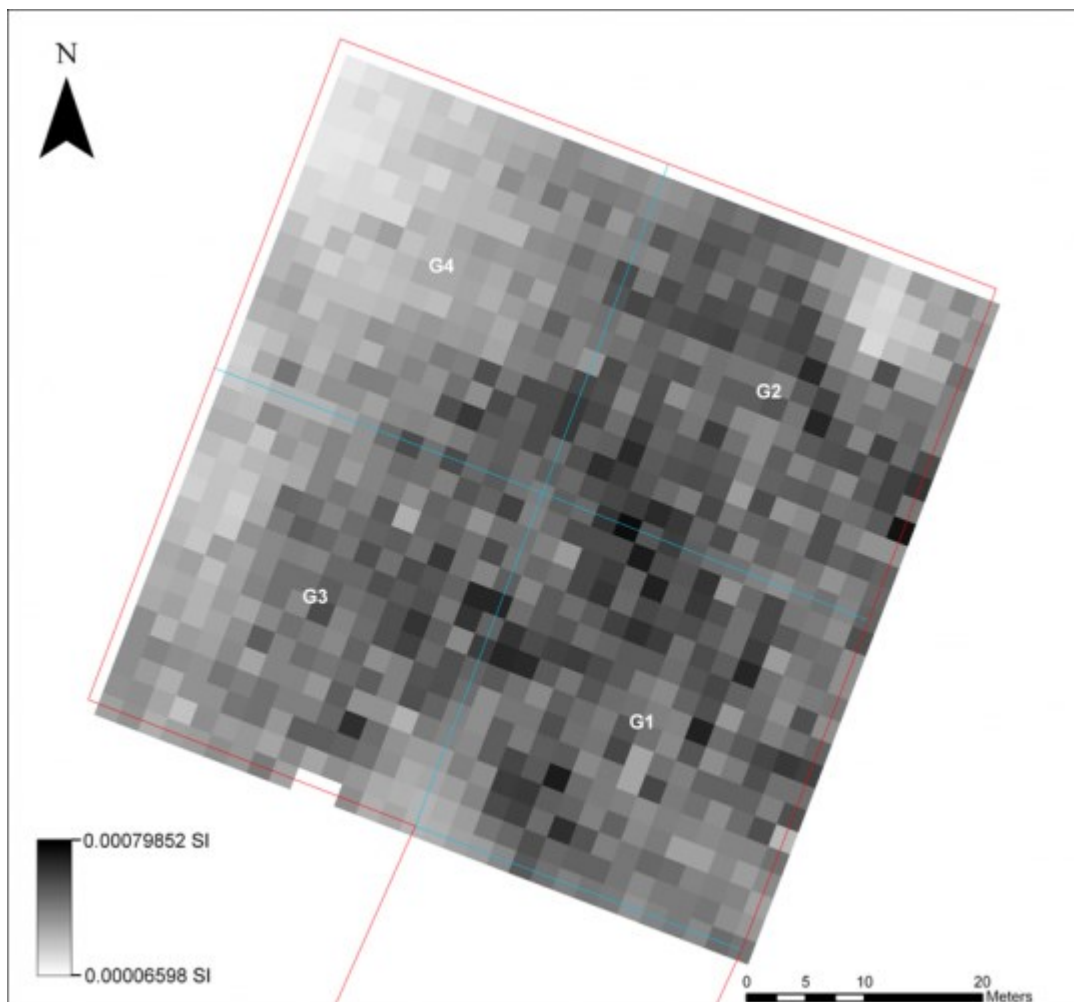
*To Do List*

**09.30** – ... my elation turns into a sinking feeling as I ponder my to-do list. It looks OK in the picture, but the thing is, each of the things on the list has it's own, usually longer list on another bit of paper somewhere. I'd been in the middle of writing a report tying up all of the loose ends from our 2011 fieldwork, when CAA and fieldwork intervened. It is a tricky job because we had to work out a lot of the data-handling as we went, so I don't have a standard set of methods that I can update with the incidental details- everything needs to be carefully explained, every decision made in the field, every bit of statistics or image correction applied afterwards.

**10:00** – Ten AM on Friday is coffee and cake time for the whole [institute](#), but I decide that today I have too much going on to take part in the chatter and socialising, and start looking at some raw data files for the report...

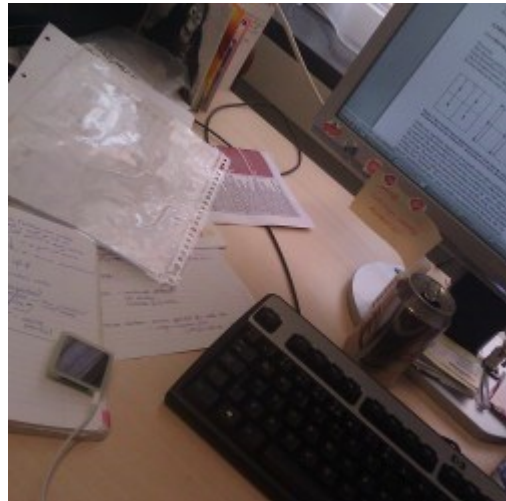
**10:15** – and my computer spectacularly crashes, fortunately the only thing it wipes out is the start of this post, which word can't recover when I get everything rebooted... and my email is misbehaving so I decide coffee is a good idea after all.

**10:30** – and I’m back at my desk. I’m working on a file from a site where gradiometer surveys **last July** showed the presence of several (probably Bronze Age) structures on a small plateau. This data is a series of surface MS (magnetic susceptibility) readings taken on the topsoil by the team in October, when I wasn’t there. They made a small but critical error in how they decided to place the readings on the grid set up for the geophysical surveys. It’s not a major problem, but it means I have to do about an hour’s careful editing work on the data before I can get it loaded into a program that lets me plot the results in a plan view, to let me look at spatial variations and compare them to other data. Luckily, the field team kept excellent notes about exactly how they gathered the data, so while it takes time, I can be sure that I have the right readings in the right place by lunchtime. I write it all up carefully in the report, and make a note to myself to update and improve the training notes and protocols I hand out to our student helpers.



*My morning’s work- the offset between the plot and the lines of the grid is intentional due to the mistake made collecting the data.*

**12:30** – and I go to lunch in one of the amazing old buildings at the heart of the university with my team. Today, the canteen has **mosterd soup** (a local speciality) that everyone loves. We chat about the football, and the weather in a mixture of English and Dutch, and then head back over to the Institute for the rest of the day.



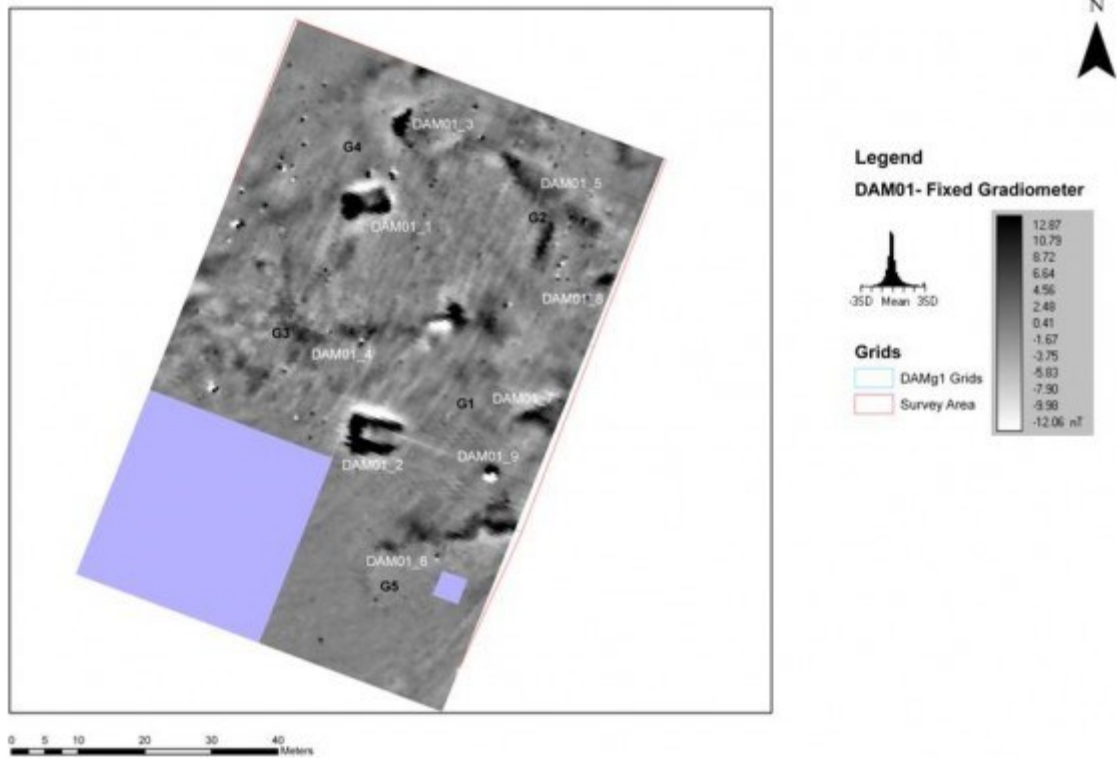
**13:30** – I've loaded the data into the plotting program and I'm making corrections to it (such as removing very high or low values, to better visualise subtle changes) when I hear a lot of commotion outside. It's the bus being loaded with all the equipment needed

*Writing it all up...*

by the teaching excavations at **Crustumerium** next month. It makes me grin, knowing people will soon be off to Italy, but for now I need to concentrate so it's in with the earphones and on with the music.

**14:30** – I have to admit I've been sneaking onto the Day of Archaeology site and following the **#dayofarchtag** on twitter. The **LAARC** guys give me a five minute break by tracking down the contents of shelf 666 for me. Turns out, it holds a neat little **bone gaming die** from Roman London. I love small finds, I don't get to work with them very often- though on this current project I'm learning a lot about protohistoric pottery. I'm fascinated by the little everyday things that make it into the archaeological record, probably more so than the big and shiny things that make the headlines.

**16:00** – I've finished with the first survey for the report. It takes a while to get everything into the GIS to compare it to the other surveys of the area we made in July, and information about pottery lying on the surface in October. I record everything I have done to the data, as well as the exact conditions it was collected under, then describe the pattern of values. Finally I write a short paragraph offering an archaeological interpretation of the data, taking into account everything we currently know about the site and the landscape. It's really important to record things in this level of detail for any future researcher that needs to understand how the final plots were made, and why I concluded specific things about the site. It's painstaking, and probably no-one will ever need to use it, but I've had the horrendous experience of trying to work with badly described geophysical data before, so I'm determined not to leave some potential future researcher in the same mess! I start with the next site. On this one, we did some surveys because workmen found a protohistoric storage vessel in a trench for an irrigation pipe, but the surveys didn't show up anything structural. I still have to write them up in the same detail though!



*The gradiometer survey of the same area*

**17:00** – **Corien**, another PhD student knocks on mine and Wieke’s door. **Wieke** is the PhD student I work with- the geophysics I do is part of a wider project encompassing **her PhD research**. We normally work until 18:00 but Corien reminds us that it is Friday, and drags us off for a post-work drink. Our project leader Martijn comes along too, and we’re joined by another PhD student from another part of the faculty. We chat about the path PhD students are expected to follow- all three of them are at different stages, and it’s quite different to the UK in some ways, so interesting to me. At six we part company and head off on our bikes...

I’m about to submit this to the team at HQ, and while I wait for it go live I’m off to read as many of the other posts as I can fit in! Happy Day of Archaeology everyone.